

doesn't seem to take the vetting done by a Senate Committee seriously is the reaction we have seen by others, including some who serve in this body. Some apparently see the due diligence and vetting done on nominees as an assembly line that produces a guaranteed outcome.

We have seen what I believe to be political operatives from outside the Senate selectively leak information in an effort to target the Finance Committee's process of vetting nominees and even the specific staffers who carry out this work. These political operatives have had a lot of work to do, as Dr. Brainard is the fifth nominee from the current administration to run into significant problems during the Finance Committee vetting process. The Finance Committee vetting process has not changed in the nearly 9 years I have been chairman or ranking member. What has changed are the specific nominees and the apparent willingness of some to tolerate and excuse issues that would have disqualified nominees from the previous administration.

Nominees in the previous administration would have had trouble garnering support if they had these sorts of problems, and I made it clear my job was not to defend a problematic nominee. Most people do not know about these problematic nominees from the past because in some cases they did not get a hearing and in others they were not nominated in the first place.

There is only one person who could tell us why the vetting process for this nominee took so long, and that person is Lael Brainard.

I have been trying to ask her questions for 9 months now without much success, so now my questions are for the critics of the Finance Committee process and those determined to see this nominee confirmed no matter what.

How long should we allow a nominee to provide incomplete and contradictory answers before we simply decide that person ought to be confirmed anyway?

Who is important enough not to be obligated to follow the same rules and obligations as all other nominees?

What high government official is so important that they ought to be exempt from the burden of routine Congressional oversight?

Is knowing the right people a substitute for simple honesty and strength of character?

As for myself, I am going to answer these questions by reiterating my opposition to the nomination.

I, Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY, do not object to proceeding to the nominations of Lael Brainard to be Under Secretary of the Treasury, Michael Mundaca to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, Mary Miller to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, and Charles Collins to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO TARAS G. SZMAGALA

• Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Taras G. "Tary" Szmagala, on the occasion of his retirement from the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority in Cleveland, OH. Tary has dedicated his life to public service and has worked tirelessly to improve the quality of life for the citizens of our community. His career demonstrates a commitment to excellence and exemplary leadership, and has earned him the respect and admiration of his friends and associates.

For 23 years, Tary has served the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, during which time he has held a number of positions, including: director of governmental relations, manager of communications, deputy general manager, interim general manager, and executive director of external affairs. He has made significant contributions towards procuring Federal and State capital improvement funds for the RTA's major projects, including, but not limited to, the Euclid Corridor Project and the extension of the Waterfront Line, and the Walkway from Tower City to Gateway.

Additionally, Tary's distinguished career in public service includes serving as special assistant to U.S. Senator Robert Taft, teacher and administrator for the Parma Board of Education, and public and personnel coordinator for the Cleveland Regional Sewer District. Moreover, he has served numerous governmental leaders and organizations, and has devoted countless hours to civic organizations, including the Stella Maris Board of Directors, the National Highway Safety Advisory Committee, the Ohio Public Transit Association, St. Ignatius High School and several colleges.

Tary has worked tirelessly to provide many Americans with a tangible connection to their Ukrainian heritage by serving on the Ukrainian Museum Archives Board of Directors, the Ukrainian National Association Board of Directors and as a representative of the Ukrainian-American community in many official capacities, including as Member of Presidential Delegation to Ukraine in 1991.

It is my privilege to recognize Tary for his diligent commitment and dedicated service to the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority, and to the community that he has served for over three decades. •

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mrs. Neiman, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages

from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations and a withdrawal which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

NOTIFICATION OF THE PRESIDENT'S INTENTION TO DESIGNATE THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES AS A BENEFICIARY DEVELOPING COUNTRY AND TO TERMINATE THE DESIGNATIONS OF CROATIA AND EQUATORIAL NEW GUINEA AS BENEFICIARY DEVELOPING PROGRAMS UNDER THE GENERALIZED SYSTEM OF PREFERENCES PROGRAM—PM 39

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report and papers; which was referred to the Committee on Finance:

To the Congress of the United States:

The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) offers duty-free treatment to specified products that are imported from designated beneficiary developing countries. The GSP is authorized by title V of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (the "Act").

In accordance with sections 502(f)(1)(A) and 502(f)(2) of the Act, I am providing notification of my intent to add the Republic of Maldives to the list of beneficiary developing countries under the GSP program and my intent to terminate the designations of Croatia and Equatorial Guinea as beneficiary developing countries under the GSP program.

In Proclamation 6813 of July 28, 1995, the designation of Maldives as a beneficiary developing country for purposes of the GSP program was suspended. After considering the criteria set forth in sections 501 and 502 of the Act, I have determined that the suspension of the designation of Maldives as a GSP beneficiary developing country should be ended.

In addition, I have determined that Croatia and Equatorial Guinea have each become a "high income" country, as defined by the official statistics of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. In accordance with section 502(e) of the Act, I have determined that the designations of Croatia and Equatorial Guinea as beneficiary developing countries under the GSP program should be terminated, effective January 1, 2011.

BARACK OBAMA.
THE WHITE HOUSE, December 23, 2009.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 1:42 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) has signed the following enrolled bill: